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CHINA

MAO'S LAST LEAP

EMILY MACFAROUHAR

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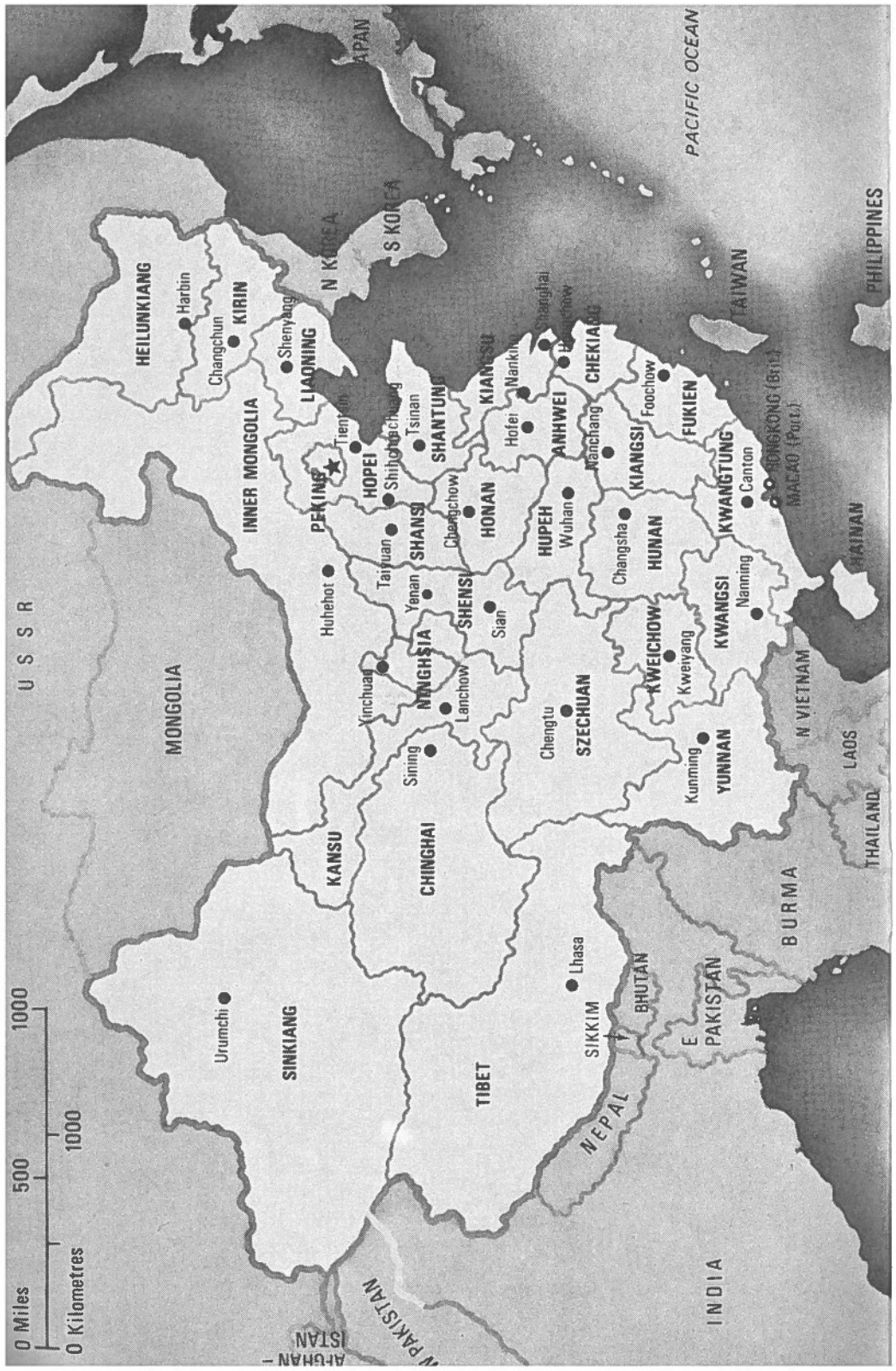
BRIEF 6



Since the summer of 1966, China has been tearing itself apart. A violent mass movement has resulted in the death of thousands, the disgrace of hundreds of thousands more and the disintegration of the Chinese communist party. The Chinese call this unprecedented upheaval a great proletarian cultural revolution. It certainly has been a revolution in terms of widespread chaos and the overthrow of important power-holders. But it has been different from all other revolutions in history. For this one was launched and led, not by a band of rebels in the hills, but by the established ruler of the country, Mao Tse-tung. Why did Mao purposely throw his country into turmoil? And what are his chances now of putting China and the Chinese communist party back together again?

Mao Tse-tung is a visionary. Of course he is a brilliantly practical political and military strategist as well. He could not have survived 25 years in the wilderness to lead the Chinese communists to victory if he had not been that. But all Mao's practical concerns are harnessed to the pursuit of a goal so ambitious that any other modern politician would dismiss it at once as idle utopianism.

Like every father of a revolution, Mao wants to guarantee that his revolution will live on after him. But Mao is concerned about much more than mere political power or even the continuance of a communist regime in China. When he speaks of preserving his revolution, he means keeping alive the vital spirit that animated him and his beleaguered band of committed communists in their times of greatest adversity—on the Long March away from Chiang Kai-shek's pursuing armies and in prolonged exile in the caves of Yenan. He means preserving the wartime ethic of ceaseless and selfless struggle as a way of life long after the war has been won.

Mao knows that in non-revolutionary situations the average man is not capable of sustaining his demanding revolutionary creed. So he has decided to do nothing less than create a new breed of revolutionary men. All communist countries conduct some form of ideological indoctrination in an attempt to assure popular adherence to marxism. But Mao is aiming at something much more fundamental. He believes it is possible virtually to remould a whole nation in his own image. He believes he can transform the Chinese people into 700 million mini-Maos.

This is what Mao has been trying to do ever since he took over the reins of the Chinese communist movement in 1935. Before the cultural revolution his method was periodic thought-reform campaigns. These drives involved, first, all the camp followers of the communist party and, after 1949, all the inhabitants of China. But they were directed primarily at China's writers and intellectuals as the people most responsible for influencing public opinion—and the ones most prone to let their own thoughts run outside orthodox channels. The communist party was also subject to "rectifications"; these were not Stalinist-type purges, although men did lose their jobs, but were part of the continuing nation-wide process of Maoist re-education.

By 1965, when the communists had ruled China for 16 years, if Mao were an ordinary political leader he would have had good reason to be content with his accomplishments: he had presided over moderate economic advances and he had given China the longest stretch of peace and unity in this century. But Mao is no such ordinary man. He felt angry and frustrated because he was 72 years old and had not yet achieved his dream of creating a nation of inner-directed Maoists.

He was especially worried about the younger generation which seemed to be lacking the revolutionary spirit he prized so highly. And he had begun to feel that the Chinese communist party, instead of helping him to regenerate this spirit, was proving a bureaucratic damper to his revolutionary aims. All these anxieties were brought to a head by his vision of the Soviet Union as an example of how communism can degenerate under a non-revolutionary leadership. So he launched the great proletarian cultural revolution as a last Herculean effort to turn China irrevocably Maoist before he died.

Miracle-makers: backyard steel furnaces during the great leap forward

1958: The first leap

Mao had made one earlier stab at creating a communist paradise in one fell swoop. That was in 1958, when he threw over the slow and steady Soviet-style methods of economic development in favour of a frenetic nation-wide production drive he called "the great leap forward". The great leap was based on Mao's belief in the extraordinary power of positive thinking. The idea was that men imbued with Maoist revolutionary spirit could work miracles—from producing steel in backyard furnaces to doubling the size of China's grain harvest overnight.

But the great leap failed. And it left in its wake a shattered economy and a deeply demoralised communist party. With disillusion rising on every side, in December 1958 Mao announced his intention to step down from the post of head of state—which he later turned over to his long-time deputy, Liu Shao-chi. He retained the more important job of chairman of the Chinese communist party. But nonetheless, beginning in 1959, Mao relinquished his management of domestic Chinese affairs to devote himself to another increasingly troublesome problem area—foreign affairs, and in particular, China's relations with the Soviet Union.

The seriousness of the opposition to Mao's romantic radicalism was revealed for the first time in the summer of 1959. At the Lushan plenum of the communist party's central committee, the minister of defence, Marshal Peng Teh-huai, delivered a scathing attack on the methods and philosophy of the great leap forward. Peng and several of his lieutenants were immediately purged for this unprecedented lèse majesté, and their dismissals were followed by a new anti-rightist campaign. But in the next few years it became clear that Peng's attitude was shared by a consider-

able proportion of Mao's colleagues in the communist party.

1959, 1960 and 1961 are now known in Chinese communist history as the "three bitter years". This was the period when bad weather combined with the disruptive effect of the great leap (and the withdrawal of Russian aid) to cause serious food shortages and a drastic drop in industrial production. Official policy made a sharp turnabout to cope with the worsening economic situation: from the extreme collectivism of the great leap, the party switched to an encouragement of material incentives; from the huge centralised people's communes the unit of agricultural decision-making was again down-graded to the small production brigade. And heavy industry was finally displaced by agriculture as the primary concern of China's economic planners.

The backpedalling from Maoism in these years did not stop at economic policy. A new permissive atmosphere also prevailed in the realm of literature and the arts. It was not until the revelations of the cultural revolution that foreign observers—and probably many Chinese—realised just how far Chinese writers went at this time in criticising party policies, even to the point of attacking Mao himself.

While he watched his revolutionary principles being progressively eroded at home, Mao was forming an even blacker impression of the fate of communist ideals in the birthplace of the Bolshevik revolution. Relations between China and Russia had been deteriorating since the late 1950s, primarily over the question of "coexistence" with the United States. Mao interpreted Soviet "softness" toward the United States as signalling a dangerous decline in Russia's revolutionary militancy; another sign—and indeed the cause—of this decline was the embourgeoisement of the Russian people, who were showing more and more interest in higher living standards and less and less in keeping revolutionary fires burning. Mao's appraisal of conditions in the Soviet Union made him certain of one thing: China must never be allowed to follow Russia's revisionist path.

1962: Revisionism recognised

In September 1962 Mao made his first major attack on "revisionist tendencies" in China. He ordered an intensification of class struggle and launched a new "rectification drive" called the socialist education campaign. He also attempted to put an end to the relative freedom which Chinese intellectuals were enjoying by successive appeals for reform of literary and art circles. At the same time, the army was running its own rectification drive under Peng Teh-huai's successor as minister of defence, Marshal Lin Piao. The indoctrination of the military was considered so successful that the country was urged to "learn from the People's Liberation Army" and military commissars began to be installed in government departments as political supervisors.

The socialist education campaign and the several other minor campaigns which accompanied it—including a drive to rear "socialist successors" among the youth—were comparatively low-pressure ones. Mao intended the campaigns to deal with all the symptoms of "spontaneous capitalism" which had been cropping up in the period of relaxation, particularly the rapid growth of free markets and private plots. But, by

Rearing socialist successors

and large, economic policy remained in the pragmatic liberal mould hammered out by Mao's colleagues after the 1958 great leap forward.

By the summer of 1964, Mao had become more convinced than ever that China faced a real threat of a "capitalist restoration" like that which he believed had already taken place in the Soviet Union. He personally drafted the ninth in the series of Chinese polemics against the Russians, published that July, and in it he presented a 15-point programme on "rooting out revisionism". Mao located the primary source of infection in literary and art circles. Accordingly, an intensified campaign for the rectification of intellectuals was launched that summer and the socialist education drive was also hotted up.

In January 1965 the socialist education campaign received another boost in the form of a central committee directive known as the 23 articles. This document, also later attributed to Mao himself, indicated Mao's dissatisfaction with the results of the rectification drives during the previous two years. And it revealed that Mao now felt that no one was immune to the revisionist virus. Calling for a new round of class struggle, he proclaimed in the directive that revisionism had penetrated the Chinese communist party; furthermore, "persons in authority following the capitalist road" were operating at all levels of the party up to and including the central committee.

1965: Birth of a revolution

Although it was not apparent at the time, January 1965 can now be cited as the real beginning of the cultural revolution. That month Mao appointed the Peking party boss, Peng Chen, as head of a five-man "cultural revolution group" charged with working out a new-style rectification drive to eliminate the revisionist danger, especially among the intellectuals. But meanwhile the pace of the on-going rectification cam-

paigns actually subsided.

One reason for this lull of almost a year may be that the top leadership in Peking was preoccupied with a foreign policy debate provoked by the threat of Chinese involvement in the Vietnam war. Several of Mao's closest colleagues argued that a reconciliation with the Soviet Union was necessary in order to secure modern weapons for an increased Chinese role in Vietnam. This view was ruled out of court by Lin Piao's thesis on people's war published in September 1965. And the issue had probably been decided at least as early as June that year, when Mao showed his contempt for the military modernisers by reviving the old guerrilla system of a rankless army. But the fact that the argument was raised at this time, and linked with a bid for better relations with the Russians, may have been one more factor in Mao's growing phobia about the revisionist "time bomb" at his side.

The Chinese date the official starting point of the cultural revolution as an enlarged meeting of the politburo standing committee in September 1965. At this meeting Mao called for a struggle against "bourgeois reactionary thinking" and specifically ordered a criticism of a play entitled "Hai Jui's Dismissal" written in 1961 by a vice-mayor of Peking, Mr Wu Han. The significance of this play, as Mao pointed out, was that it was actually a demand for the reinstatement of the dismissed critic of the great leap forward, Peng Teh-huai, cloaked in a historical tale about a dismissed Ming dynasty official. The attack that Mao ordered was duly written by an experienced literary witch-hunter and published on November 10th in the Shanghai paper, *Wen Hui Pao*.

Clearly the wheels of the cultural revolution were already beginning to turn. But even the man who was ostensibly intended to lead it, the head of the "cultural revolution group", Peng Chen, did not yet sense the full dimension of Mao's master plan. Peng himself, as Wu Han's direct superior in the Peking municipal government, was necessarily implicated in the misdeeds of his lieutenant. But he might have escaped censure on this issue—if Mao had not been determined to trap him anyway, and if he had not decided to stand and fight.

For the next several months, Peng Chen tried to lower the temperature of the campaign against Wu Han by deflecting attention from the highly sensitive political question of the Peng Teh-huai affair and focusing on the safer academic question of whether the Hai Jui play was historically accurate. In February 1966 Peng Chen issued a memorandum on behalf of the cultural revolution group putting forward a programme for a new "rectification" of China's intellectuals. It was not the revolutionary document that Mao wanted.

But Mao had already turned elsewhere for assistance and support on his projected revolution. Another plan for an assault on the intellectuals was issued a few days after Peng Chen's, this one drawn up by Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, under the imprimatur of the army. Immediately afterwards, the army newspaper began publishing a series of editorials setting out the principles of a cultural purge. With the increasing prominence being given to the minister of defence, Lin Piao, the editorials indicated that the army had been awarded a new political role as Mao's chosen instrument in the great revolutionary movement that was to come. Another of his chosen instruments was Mrs Mao.

Posters posters everywhere

Spring 1966: From polemic to purge

In April 1966 the cultural revolution got going in earnest. The attacks on Wu Han became unmistakably political. They widened to include other members of the Peking municipal administration who were also accused of writing veiled criticisms of Mao and his policies in 1961 and 1962. By mid-May, newspaper denunciations of the Peking writers around Wu Han began to allude to a behind-the-scenes boss who was responsible for the "counter-revolutionary" activities of this notorious clique. On May 16th an enlarged session of the politburo with Mao in the chair issued a circular cancelling Peng Chen's February memorandum, dissolving his cultural revolution group and appointing a new group under Mao's former political secretary, Chen Po-ta. Two weeks later it was officially announced that on May 25th the Peking municipal party committee had been reorganised and that Peng Chen had been replaced as its first secretary and mayor of Peking.

The purge of Peng Chen, the highest-ranking communist to fall from power since Peng Teh-huai, precipitated a major upheaval in Peking. That same day the first "big character poster" was put up by seven young teachers and students at Peking University. The poster denounced the president of the university and the university's party secretary for "falling into the pit of revisionism". These "bourgeois royalists" were fired by the new Peking party committee at midnight on June 3rd. The next day, the purge began spreading throughout the country.

The movement everywhere seemed to follow a common pattern. An official would be attacked, first in isolated posters, then, as attackers gathered strength, in a blitzkrieg of posters and at a succession of mass meetings. Often the victim would try to organise his defence, as the president of Peking University did, by counter-attacking his critics and attempting to use his authority to silence them. But at this point, a "work team" from the higher-level party committee would arrive to decide the case, usually by putting the official seal on the purge.

Most of the hundreds of men who fell during June and July 1966 were educators or party workers concerned with ideology and propaganda—in short, members of the very circles which Mao had pinpointed as the breeding grounds of revisionism. In mid-June, after a number of university presidents had been dismissed, all China's schools and universities were shut down with the promise that by the time they re-opened—which was originally intended to be within six months—the country's educational system would have been completely revolutionised.

In early July 1966 the next major purges were announced. Chou Yang, the man who had been Mao's literary czar and the leading champion of intellectual orthodoxy since the thirties, was suddenly denounced as "a big red umbrella" covering up "demons and monsters" in the literary field. Shortly after, Chou's boss, the party propaganda director and minister of culture, Lu Ting-yi, was also revealed to have lost his job. He was replaced as propaganda director by an up-and-coming party boss from the central-south region, Tao Chu.

Summer 1966: Enter Mao

But the man who made the most spectacular leap into the public eye in July 1966 was Mao Tse-tung himself. Mao had disappeared from view altogether for six months beginning in November 1965; before he made his first reappearance with a visiting Albanian in May, there had been considerable speculation that he was seriously ill or even dead. Then on July 16th he took a nine-mile swim in the Yangtse river in front of an audience of cheering thousands. Despite raised eyebrows in western countries about the speed and length of his journey, this epic aquatic performance successfully scotched the rumours about his physical incapacities as nothing else could have done.

After the swim, Mao returned to Peking to prepare for the first plenary session of the central committee in four years. He also took the management of the cultural revolution out of the hands of the men who had been directing it during his absence: his second-in-command, Liu Shao-chi, and the head of the party secretariat, Teng Hsiao-ping. Months later, attacks on these two men revealed that Mao felt they had betrayed his revolutionary purposes in this period by organising the purge so as to suppress the genuine leftists and protect the revisionists. This alleged mishandling of the first phase of the cultural revolution was probably used as the immediate pretext for the demotion of Liu and Teng at the momentous meeting of the central committee from August 1st to 12th. But subsequent official denunciations left no doubt that the elimination of Liu Shao-chi and, secondarily, Teng Hsiao-ping, was part and parcel of Mao's basic plan for the cultural revolution from the very beginning.

The eve of the central committee session coincided with the announcement of another major purge. Lo Jui-ching, the army chief of staff, had been out of public sight since the previous November. His dismissal, probably some months earlier, was confirmed on August 1st by the identification of one of his deputies, Yang Cheng-wu, as acting chief of staff. Yang's speech at the Peking celebration of the army anniversary indicated one likely reason for Lo's fall: he had opposed the ever-increasing

"You are our leader, Chairman Mao; you are our beacon light".
We have no doubts about you now; your health must be all right.

emphasis on Maoist indoctrination of the army at the expense of specialist training and the acquisition of modern weapons.

Army Day was also made the occasion for the publication of the first of two important Maoist documents issued in August 1966. The Army Day message called for nothing less than the immediate implementation of the project dearest to Mao's heart: the transformation of the Chinese people into a new breed of renaissance men.

> By acting in accordance with what Comrade Mao Tse-tung has said, the 700 million people of our country will all become critics of the old world as well as builders and defenders of the new world. With hammer in hand they will be able to do factory work, with hoe, plough or harrow they will be able to do farming, with the gun they will be able to fight the enemy and with the pen they will be able to express themselves in writing. In this way, the whole country will be a great school of Mao Tse-tung's thought, a great school of communism.

This extraordinary transformation was to begin with the army, but the rest of the country was expected to follow "where conditions permit".

The second major cultural revolutionary document was a 16-point

decision by the central committee issued a week later on August 8th, 1966. What the decision attempted to do essentially was to impose some sense of order on the chaos that had been mounting throughout China for the previous two months. It acknowledged that the cultural revolution had met formidable resistance, chiefly from within the communist party. But it reminded over-eager revolutionaries that the struggle should be conducted by reasoning and not by force. And it continued to regard the party as the only rightful leader of the new mass movement.

August 18, 1966: The great rally

If the 16-point decision had ever actually been put into effect, the cultural revolution would have been a different movement from what it turned out to be. But only ten days after the publication of this relatively sober document, Mao's true intentions were revealed at a million-strong rally in Peking. First, the rally confirmed that the cultural revolution was no ordinary rectification drive; the rank order of the top leaders on the reviewing stand revealed the most important party shake-up since Mao assumed the party chairmanship 31 years before. And, second, the rally unveiled the new youth organisation which was to lead the movement into a years-long wave of terror—the Red Guards.

The chief casualty of the realignment of the leadership was Liu Shao-chi. After 21 years as Mao's second-in-command, he was pushed down to number eight in the party rankings. In his former place at Mao's side was the defence minister, Lin Piao, now confirmed as the heir apparent. Prime minister Chou En-lai remained in third place, but after him came two newcomers to the top ranks: Tao Chu, the new propaganda director, in fourth place, and Chen Po-ta, the head of the cultural revolution group, as number five. Teng Hsiao-ping lost status by the promotion of Tao and Chen above him. The other significant change in the rankings was the promotion of Mrs Mao into the top party lists for the first time as number 28.

Peking had scarcely recovered from the impact of the August 18th rally when the Red Guards began to show their stuff. Brandishing their talisman—the little red book of Mao's quotations—the first roving gangs of youngsters came out on the streets on August 20th. They covered the walls of the city with "big character posters" presenting the residents of the capital with an ultimatum: all remnants of bourgeois society must be destroyed within the week.

Shopkeepers were ordered to stop selling cosmetics and "outlandish" western fashions. Restaurants were ordered to simplify menus. Signs were ripped down from shopfronts and "odious imperialist street names" like Eternal Peace Boulevard and Street of the Prince's Well were changed to East is Red Boulevard and Prevent Revisionism Street. The Russian embassy found itself on the road called Struggle Against Revisionism, where students held a massive demonstration shouting anti-Russian slogans around portraits of Stalin and Mao.

Day by day the violence mounted and spread. The Red Guards turned against Peking's remaining churches and then mosques, Buddhist temples and private homes. A few days after the riots began in Peking, similar

Red Guards in action on Struggle Against Revisionism Street

activities were reported in other cities. Gradually the targets changed from "bourgeois" names, possessions and habits to "counter-revolutionary" party officials. Bands of young vigilantes would invade a party headquarters, drag out the offending officials and parade them through the streets in that traditional symbol of humiliation, the dunce's cap.

The official Chinese press confirmed that the Red Guards had the full backing of the Maoist regime. Peking radio called the demonstrations "magnificent" and a *People's Daily* editorial declared that "opposing the revolutionary actions of the revolutionary students constitutes a direct opposition to Chairman Mao's teachings". At a second massive Red Guard rally on August 31st, Chou En-lai endorsed the increasingly popular pastime of Red Guard migrations throughout the country "to exchange revolutionary experiences". But two weeks later, at a third million-man rally, he sounded a note of caution: Red Guards were not to invade factories and farms. The prime minister was already apprehensive of exactly what eventually happened: that the Red Guard movement would wreak havoc with production.

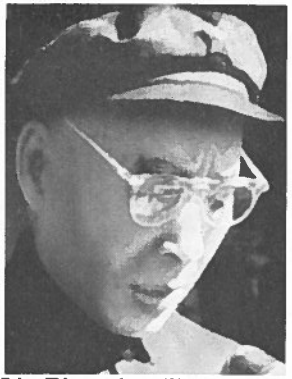
Autumn 1966: The party paralysed

By October 1st, 1966, communist China's 17th National Day, the four-month-old cultural revolution had made serious depredations in the ranks of the communist party. Officials from some 20 out of the 26 provincial party committees and hundreds more on lower levels had been purged or criticised. But, just as in the earlier phase of the revolution, party officials did not take the assaults of Mao's young warriors lying down. In many

Ins

These are the people who matter most in China in 1968. Except for Mao and Chou, they have risen to the very top during the cultural revolution and except for Chou they are closely identified with its extremist policies.
Other members of Mao's inner circle are: **Kang Sheng,** a shadowy figure suspected of links with the secret police; **Chang Chun-chiao,** a member of the cultural revolution group and Mao's main trouble-shooter in the Shanghai area; **Yao Wen-yuan,** member of the cultural revolution group; **Hsieh Fu-chih,** minister of public security and chairman of the Peking municipal revolutionary committee; **Yeh Chun,** Lin Piao's wife.

Mao Tse-tung: without whom none of this would have been possible. At 74 plus, Mao is a man obsessed with a vision of permanent revolution. His attempt to set this revolution going in China has shaken his control over parts of the country but he is still its paramount ruler and is likely to remain so as long as he lives.



Lin Piao: the ailing 61 year old minister of defence whom Mao chose as his anointed successor in 1966. Despite his new prominence, Lin does not seem to have played an active part in the direction of the cultural revolution. His record as a war hero may sustain him as China's titular leader after Mao but he is not a credible successor to real power.

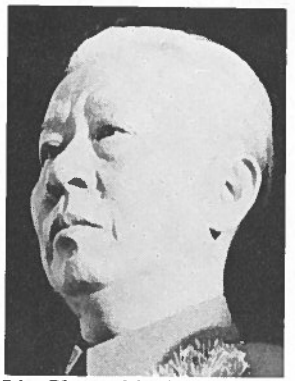
Chou En-lai: the 69 year old prime minister who has been the main spokesman for order and moderation during the past two years. An unlikely cultural revolutionary, Chou has maintained his 40 year record of landing on the winning side of every important party struggle. If he survives Mao, Chou is the leader best equipped to hold China together.

Chen Po-ta: Mao's former political secretary who shot up to fourth place in the Chinese hierarchy during his tenure as head of the cultural revolution group. Chen has been one of the backroom planners of the revolution and is considered one of its leading "hawks".

Chiang Ching (Mrs. Mao): whose long-festering resentments were a vital catalyst in Mao's planning of the cultural revolution. Mao's wife is probably the major leftist influence on her husband. As deputy head of the cultural revolution group, she has personally directed many Red Guard activities.

Outs

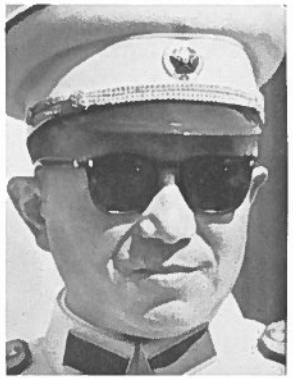
Among the millions of Chinese who suffered during the cultural revolution, these five had the most to lose. Liu Shao-chi had been Mao's second-in-command since 1945 but Teng and Peng were also considered among the contenders for the succession. Other people who fell from great heights during the cultural revolution are: **Lu Ting-yi,** the former propaganda director and minister of culture; **Chou Yang,** Lu's deputy and Mao's literary commissar for 30 years; **Li Ching-chuan,** a politburo member and powerful regional boss of southwest China; **Tao Chu,** who rocketed into the fourth party slot in July 1966 and fell just as rapidly six months later.



Liu Shao-chi: the principal victim of the cultural revolution, labelled "the Khrushchev of China" or "the leading party power-holder who is taking the capitalist road." Liu has never been officially dismissed but he has not functioned as head of state since his demotion from the number two position in the party in August 1966.

Teng Hsiao-ping: the former general secretary of the Chinese communist party who has been linked with Liu as one of China's two top "capitalist-roaders." Teng, like Liu, has not been attacked by name or publicly humiliated but also like Liu he has been accused of opposing Mao on every important policy issue for the past 40 years.

Peng Chen: the former "smiling mayor" of Peking whose fall from power in June 1966 signalled the beginning of the cultural revolutionary purges. As Teng Hsiao-ping's deputy in the party secretariat and party boss of the capital, Peng used to be one of the six most powerful men in China.



Lo Jui-ching: the former chief of staff who disappeared from public view as early as November 1965 and was revealed to have been purged nine months later. Lo, like other cultural revolutionary victims, was accused of advocating pragmatic policies in opposition to Mao's revolutionary ones.

Yang Cheng-wu: Lo Jui-ching's successor who never quite made it. Yang was acting chief of staff until March 1968 when he became the latest major figure to be purged. He was a fervent public practitioner of the Mao cult but seems to have run afoul of Mrs. Mao and the cultural revolution group.

Party officials eating humble pie

areas, particularly where party leaders were long entrenched and had close associations with the local military command, they organised their own battalions of supporters to do battle with the Red Guards. And in many cases the Red Guards, who often consisted of "foreign" groups from out of the province, were successfully beaten back.

Although Chou En-lai managed for the most part to protect the 1966 harvest from revolutionary reverberations, by mid-autumn the attacks on local party committees were already having their effect on the nation's administration. In Maoist China, more than in any other communist country, even Stalinist Russia, the communist party dominated all branches and all levels of government. So the paralysis of the party meant that the administration of the country was grinding to a stop. Furthermore, by their ruthless treatment of veteran party workers, the Red Guards were pushing more and more party officials into opposition. Usually this meant an independent effort to damp down the local Red Guard movement; but party leaders did maintain contacts and coordinate tactics with colleagues in other provinces.

At the end of October the leadership made its first attempt to counter this trend by offering an amnesty to all but the hard-core "capitalist-roaders". But any inclination that beleaguered party officials might have had to accept this offer was soon undermined by the spectacle presented by the top-level cultural revolutionaries. First Red Guards attacked Li Hsueh-feng, the man who had replaced Peng Chen as first secretary of Peking. Then posters began to attack Tao Chu, the new number four party leader and propaganda chief. By the end of November Mao's wife, who was also deputy head of the cultural revolution group, had taken over

effective control of cultural work. And Tao Chu was out on his ear.

At about this time the first concerted attacks on Liu Shao-chi began. In that peculiarly Chinese way, he had simply been ignored since his downfall in the summer until posters revealed that he had been required to write the first of a series of self-criticisms. This first self-criticism, like all the subsequent ones, was rejected as inadequate and posters demanded his dismissal. But evidently Mao felt that Liu's eminence as head of state made him a case for special handling. Even six months later, after he had been denounced in the official press, Liu remained somehow, mysteriously, in the background, never officially dismissed (only the National Assembly and a party congress could do this legally) and never offered up to the Red Guards for public humiliation.

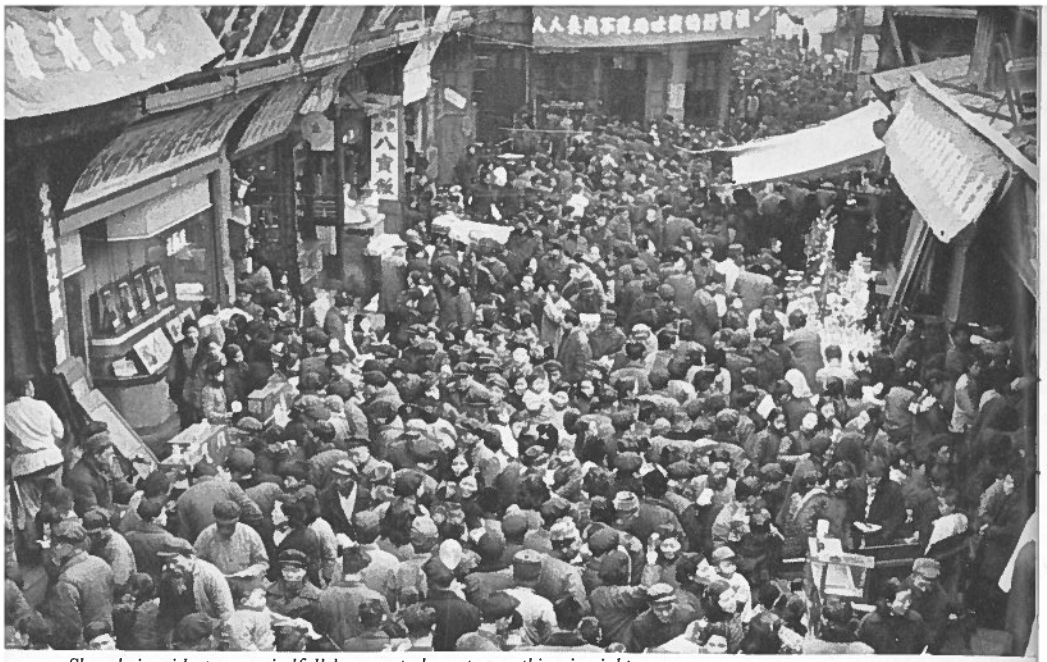
The other top purge victims were not so lucky as Liu. In early December 1966, Peng Chen was hauled out of his home in the middle of the night by Red Guards. A week later Peng and Lu Ting-yi, the former propaganda chief, Lo Jui-ching, the former army chief of staff, and Yang Shang-kun, a former high-ranking member of the central committee, were all forced to appear at a public rally in Peking wearing huge placards of denunciation. Lo's leg was broken, reportedly in a suicide attempt. But notably, this was the worst physical damage known to have been inflicted on any top-level target of the cultural revolution. Even in the heat of battle, Mao has never been a Stalin.

In mid-November 1966, Peking told the Red Guards that their free travel privileges would be ended and they were all to return home. The main reason seems to have been the colossal congestion in China's road and rail services caused by the millions of junketing youngsters. After the eighth and last Red Guard rally of the 1966 season on November 25th and 26th, the New China News Agency reported that Mao Tse-tung had received eleven million Red Guards in Peking since the inaugural rally in August—that is, more than half of all the university and secondary-school students in China. This enormous influx into Peking had also caused serious shortages of food, housing and medicine; Chou En-lai admitted that over 100,000 Red Guards were ill in the capital.

Winter 1967: Workers join the fight

When the Red Guards were ordered home for the winter, many China-watchers concluded that the whole cultural revolution was going into cold storage. But the Red Guards were too heady with their new-found freedom to obey the order. And, more important, Mao had no such thing in mind. Within weeks, the Red Guards had been given a new mission and another revolutionary army appeared to stoke the flames still higher.

Although the Red Guards had been the main shock troops of the revolution from the beginning, since October more and more workers and even some peasants had been drawn into the conflict, both by local Maoists and by resisting party officials. Clashes involving workers and students were becoming more frequent and more bloody. By December, Mao had evidently decided that the phase of insulating the economy from the cultural revolution was over and that the time had come to link the Red Guard movement with a similar revolutionary uprising by the proletariat and



Shanghai residents use windfall bonuses to buy up everything in sight

the peasantry. So on December 26th, his 73rd birthday, the *People's Daily* gave a formal go-ahead for a full-scale extension of the revolution into factories and farms.

The Chinese now look back on January 1967 as a high point in the history of the cultural revolution. This was the month of the "January Revolution" when the "revolutionary masses" carried out their first "power seizure" in Shanghai. What actually happened in Shanghai and other cities in the last weeks of 1966 and the first weeks of 1967 was an unprecedented outburst of industrial strikes and street violence.

For months, workers had been resenting the licence that had been granted to the rampaging Red Guards; now they took Peking's encouragement to "make revolution" as a signal to throw down their tools and at the same time to demand immediate redress for all their stored-up economic grievances. Local party leaders, who until then had been struggling to keep production lines moving, either gave way to the radical trend or used the opportunity to fight the Maoists with their own weapons. They simply took official instructions to their logical extreme and handed out bonuses and wage increases along with free tickets for protest delegations to Peking. The result was a near standstill in local industry, a wild run on consumer goods and another collapse of China's rail services as more than a million workers descended on the capital.

The army moves in

At first Mao and his colleagues welcomed the Shanghai upsurge as a model revolutionary action. When 32 Red Guard organisations claimed to have "knocked down" the local party committee, Mao called on the whole nation to imitate the Shanghai experience. But within days Peking

was making frantic attempts to stop the economic and political chaos which accompanied the Shanghai "power seizure" and which had already spread to other cities. The *People's Daily* condemned the worrisome new phenomenon of industrial stoppages and worker protests as an insidious new form of trade unionism which it labelled "economism". The central committee issued a new set of public security regulations. But it was clear that if Mao was serious about stopping the violence, he had no alternative to calling in the army. This is what he did on January 23rd, when he ordered the army "to send troops to help any genuine revolutionary body which seeks help" and "to attack any counter-revolutionary elements which resort to arms".

From this time on, the army became the dominant power on the local scene in China. Not only did it play a crucial role in supporting all subsequent revolutionary "power seizures"; it gradually assumed most of the administrative functions previously performed by the government and the party. The army itself was not considered altogether free of ideological problems. Its cultural revolution group was reorganised in early January 1967 and again in March. Its political department was dissolved some months later and a considerable number of leading military figures were purged. But because of its increasingly important responsibilities as the only nation-wide organisation still intact and functioning, the army was spared the full brunt of a revolutionary struggle within its own ranks.

Compromise over cadres

The mobilisation of the army was Mao's first major compromise with his ideal of a spontaneous popular revolution. His second was a campaign launched in February 1967 to dilute the revolutionary element in the new organs of power with rehabilitated party officials. By the end of January the revolutionary rebels, both Red Guards and workers, had already demonstrated the shortcomings which were to prevent them from ever becoming an effective political force. Rebel organisations had so proliferated that in Shanghai alone there were 111 separate groups within a week of the power seizure. Competition was fierce, and the army was called in to break up battles among rival groups in a number of cities. So the leaders in Peking realised that if the new power organs were really to take up where the party left off, they would have to include men of political and administrative experience. This meant party cadres.

The final pattern for the new revolutionary organs was fixed by mid-February. After a brief flirtation with a nebulous structure modelled on the Paris Commune of 1871, Peking plumped for a "revolutionary committee" consisting of a "three-way alliance" of representatives of revolutionary mass organisations, party cadres and the army. By the end of the month, four provinces had formed revolutionary committees along these lines: Heilungkiang, Kweichow, Shantung and Shansi. The next power seizure came in April, when a municipal revolutionary committee was established in Peking under the public security chief, Hsieh Fu-chih.

Just as January 1967 is seen in retrospect as the apogee of the cultural revolution, so February is regarded as the nadir. The Chinese now describe the effort to reinstate party officials as the "February counter-

current". A deputy prime minister, Tan Chen-lin, is identified as the ringleader of a drive by discredited party leaders to carry out a "counter-revolutionary restoration". Whether the widespread opposition to Maoist extremism ever took such an organised form is doubtful. But party officials seem to have been notably successful in regaining their local influence.

Perhaps because of the ascendancy of old party administrators at the local and even the national level, the general tempo of the cultural revolution in February and March 1967 was conspicuously moderate. The Red Guards were told to stop exchanging revolutionary experiences and get back to school where the army would put them through "a painful process of protracted ideological struggle". Peasants were instructed to suspend the cultural revolution in order to devote their full attention to spring planting. And workers were reminded that the time for carrying out revolutionary activities was after they had worked a full eight-hour day.

But this effort to steer China back to relative normality was short-lived. By early April 1967 the leftists in the leadership had regained the upper hand. They launched a new "powerful general offensive against the top party power-holder who is taking the capitalist road"—that is, Liu Shao-chi. And they rebuked the army for allowing the "counter-current" to develop by failing to carry out Mao's highly ambiguous instructions to "support the left". An important directive from the Military Affairs Committee on April 6th put severe limitations on the power of the army to deal with the feuding revolutionaries: local troops were forbidden to open fire on mass organisations, to label them counter-revolutionary or to make mass arrests without specific authorisation from Peking.

July 1967: The Wuhan incident

The result of these restrictions on the army combined with the official encouragement of local revolutionaries was a new wave of "anarchism" and "unprincipled civil wars". Various attempts were made to reimpose some degree of order, the main one being the issuing of another important directive on June 6th warning revolutionaries that armed struggle, destruction and unauthorised arrests were all forbidden. But the army's hands were still tied by the prohibition against the use of force. And in the absence of any meaningful restraining power, China became submerged in another upsurge of violence even worse than the early days of the Red Guards. Posters reported lurid tales of mass murders by rival factions and the casualties mounted into the hundreds of thousands.

One of the worst trouble spots was the industrial centre of Wuhan which became the scene of Mao's first direct challenge from a local military leader. In July 1967 Mao sent his public security chief, Hsieh Fu-chih, and propaganda director, Wang Li, on a tour of the provinces to try to settle some of the outstanding factional disputes. When Hsieh and Wang got to Wuhan, they named one set of revolutionaries as the true Maoists. It happened that this judgment reversed a previous decision by the local military leadership to support an opposing revolutionary group. The local army men, furious at having their local authority interfered with, promptly placed Mao's two emissaries under arrest.

Peking eventually managed to extricate Hsieh and Wang and retaliated

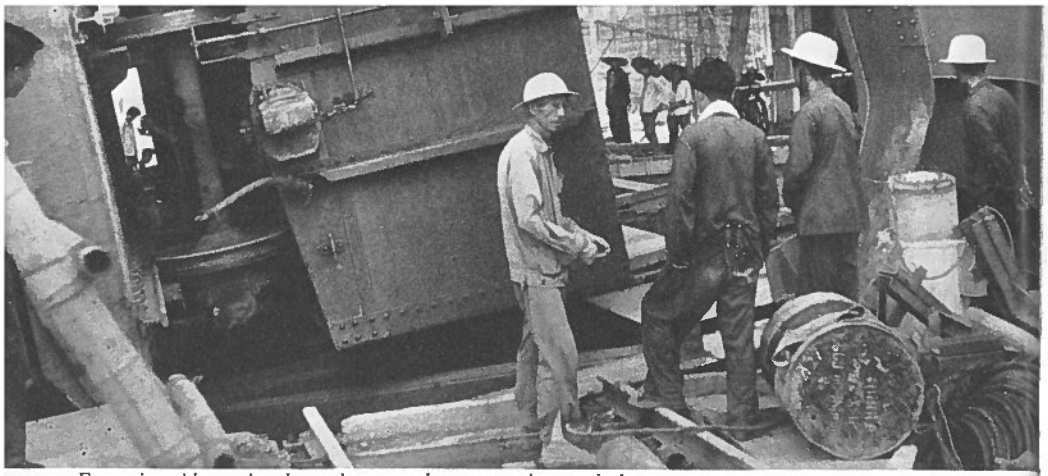
Britain's Peking mission under seige

by dismissing the entire Wuhan military command. But the Maoists were clearly shaken by this demonstration of provincial assertiveness, if not rebellion. The Wuhan incident raised the spectre of a return to warlordism which could put an end, not only to the cultural revolution, but to communist rule and China's hard-won national unity. So the Maoists took emergency action. They tightened the screws on local military leaders to put them under firm control from Peking. And they distributed weapons to selected Red Guard units to serve as a countervailing power on the left. Other extreme leftists took advantage of the prevailing radical sentiment to seize control of the foreign ministry. They demonstrated their revolutionary spirit—and made up for the failures of revolutionaries in Hongkong—by burning down the British mission in Peking.

Autumn 1967: Putting on the brakes

The cultural revolution had already had a sharp negative impact on Chinese diplomacy. Most ambassadors were withdrawn for "re-education" in the winter of 1967 and few have since returned. Trivial incidents involving overseas Chinese in Hongkong and Burma were allowed to blow up into major international confrontations. And the manhandling of foreign diplomats in Peking and revolutionary excesses by overseas "Red Guards" brought the number of countries actively feuding with China to 32. But the embassy burning (which was never officially admitted in the Chinese press) was taken by moderates in the leadership as a last straw. This and what one top leader described as "the extremely serious state of anarchy" in the country were used to convince Mao that the time had come for another slowing down of the revolution.

Mrs Mao, who had long been identified as one of the most militant cultural revolutionaries, announced the change of tack. In an important speech on September 5th she repudiated armed struggle and the widespread attacks on the army that followed the Wuhan incident. On the same day, the central committee ordered the confiscation of all weapons seized from the armed forces and authorised the army to hit back in self-defence.



Economism rides again: the work-as-you please system in a steel plant

Mao Tse-tung himself revealed his concern about the state of his revolution in September by undertaking his first provincial tour since he went to investigate the problems raised by the great leap forward in 1958. His conclusion was euphoric:

> The situation of the great proletarian cultural revolution throughout the country is not just good but excellent . . . The important sign of this excellent situation is that the masses of the people have been fully aroused. Never before in any mass movement have the masses been mobilised so widely and in such a deep-going manner as this.

But his "great strategic plan" for carrying out the next phase of the revolution showed somewhat more realism. He acknowledged that bitter factional struggles divided his revolutionary forces and demanded an effort to heal them; he restated the need to rehabilitate party cadres and bring them into the revolutionary alliances; and, returning to his own favourite hobby-horse, he called for a national spiritual revival through an intensification of the cult of his thoughts. He also sanctioned a purge of several members of the cultural revolution group who were made the scapegoats for the extremist "errors" of the summer.

During the last months of 1967, the mopping up operation showed some signs of success. Reports of violent conflicts slowed down to a trickle; Red Guards began going back to school and workers back to factories. The peasants were credited with gathering in "a bumper harvest unparalleled in history". And the tumultuous province of Kwangtung was brought under sufficient control for the autumn export fair to be held in Canton a month late.

But by January 1968 the "evil winds" which had plagued the cultural revolution for more than a year were blowing again. "Counter-revolutionary economism" was back with widespread demands for higher wages and a sharp increase in speculation and black marketeering. Workers and managers stopped going to work or, if they did go, worked at paces and hours of their own choosing, thus causing extensive slowdowns in production. Continued factional struggles accounted for most of the new round of violence. But these were compounded by old clan and village feuds which began breaking out into the open after years of suppression. Like the resurgence of gambling and petty crime, these feuds exemplify one of the ironies of the cultural revolution: the movement that was meant to wipe out old ways of thought ended up by reviving traditional loyalties and vices in their most potent pre-communist form.

Peking's answer to all this was a frantic drive to complete the establishment of its new revolutionary order. Accordingly, revolutionary committees started popping up thick and fast: as many in the first two months of 1968 as in the whole of the previous year, and by the end of May only five short of the number needed to cover all 26 provinces. In fact, these new committees represented nothing like the original model of a revolutionary power seizure. Most of them were imposed from above after months of persuasion and pressure in Peking. And most of them only papered over bitter factional disputes which tended to break out again as soon as the delegates had left the seductive presence of Chou En-lai.

1968: The party revisited

The leadership was plainly anxious to have something positive to show for two years of cultural revolution. But by 1968 neither Mao nor his colleagues could have had much faith left in the effectiveness of the revolutionary committee system. Even the veteran committees, which had been formed in the heat of the revolutionary upsurge a year before, had never been able to put aside their power struggles long enough to run their local administrations or even to keep the peace. And the failure of the revolutionaries meant that in almost every province the controlling power on the committee and on the local scene had fallen to the army.

For all Mao's admiration for the army and military virtues, he has always been a strong believer in civilian rule. And he is hardly likely now to want to see his last great revolution end with the abdication of state power to the military. So, since the autumn of 1967, his spokesmen have been discussing plans to rebuild the one civilian bureaucracy that has been proved to work in modern China—the communist party.

The obstacles to reviving the communist party after the experiences of the last two years are formidable. Party cadres have been so intimidated by the successive waves of Red Guard terror that all the eleventh-hour inducements to return to the fold have not convinced them that, once back, they will not be persecuted again. The standard Maoist formula—that over 90 per cent of the cadres are good and can be reformed—was being trumpeted again at the end of May. But at the same time local revolutionaries were encouraged to reassert their dominance in revolutionary committees and to carry out a new vendetta against the wily old party revisionists who had infiltrated the committees and revolutionary organisations in the guise of true Maoists.

This latest revisionist hunt was part of a general swing to the left in the spring of 1968. It followed a top-level purge of the army in which the acting chief of staff, the Peking garrison commander and the air force commissar lost their jobs, allegedly for plotting against the cultural revolution group. And it paralleled a new move to strengthen the revolutionaries vis-à-vis the army by creating armed para-military bands of workers and Red Guards. But the renewed campaign against "counter-revolutionaries" was more than just a sign that the leftists were riding high again; it was also a symptom of one of the most fundamental and intractable problems of the cultural revolution.

Who whom?

Ever since the first chaotic days of June 1966, when university students rose up to denounce every authority in sight, the widening purge has been dogged by the problem of identification: who are the true "handful of capitalist roaders" and who are the true "revolutionaries"? In these early stages, the issue was settled by work groups sent down by higher-level party committees. But this method was disavowed by Mao himself in mid-July of 1966. From then on, except for the most important cases which were decided in Peking, the labels of "revolutionary" and "counter-revolutionary" were divided up like battle spoils after vicious fighting.

Basically this fitted Mao's notion of the cultural revolution as an epic struggle out of which new revolutionary leaders would automatically emerge. But as successive battles brought successive redefinitions of good guys and bad guys, the truth-by-struggle method did not come close to providing the basis for a final sorting out of the Maoist sheep from the anti-Maoist goats. And without this, how would it be possible to end the revolution and select the membership of a new communist party?

Mao offered two answers. First, the cultural revolution would have to be a continuous affair, an unending series of purges and mass struggles to keep China safe from a "capitalist restoration". Second, the new party would have to be selected from above, much as the newest revolutionary committees had been. And although the framework would be civilian, and approved revolutionaries would be drafted into party ranks, the largest element in the reconstituted party would probably have to be the military men who were actually running things on the ground.

It is impossible to estimate the impact of the cultural revolution on the full 20 million membership of the communist party. But the listings of the leadership in May 1968 revealed just how far top party ranks had been decimated. Only a third of the full members of the central committee appeared at the important May Day celebrations and less than half of the pre-cultural-revolution politburo. At a later meeting, after some further sifting out had been done, the magic circle around Mao was shown to contain seven people who can be classified as cultural revolutionaries, including the wives of Mao and Lin Piao; three top military leaders, including Lin Piao himself; two men who are essentially government figures, including the prime minister, Chou En-lai; two public security offcers; and not a single person whose primary association is with the communist party apparatus.

This is the group which, pending the next round of purges, will presumably be voted in as the new politburo standing committee and the group which will be responsible for the direction of Chinese policy in the months or perhaps years to come. Its heavy weighting in favour of the radicals who made their careers in the cultural revolution is another indication that Chinese policy is likely to be similarly radical in the period ahead.

Although all the party and army leaders who were classified as anti-Maoists during the last two years were accused of advocating a set of distinctly non-radical political and economic policies, it would be misleading to view the cultural revolution as a confrontation between two ideological camps: China's radicals led by Mao and its conservatives led

The once and future kingpins of China: the army

by Liu Shao-chi. Certainly there had been policy differences among the top leadership from the earliest days, most of which could be charted along a radical-conservative spectrum. But despite the claims that Liu and others had consistently opposed Mao on every issue for 40 years, there is no historically-supported reason to believe that the policy debates had actually divided the Chinese leadership in such a consistent way.

Some people took a different line from Mao on some issues, some on others; in most cases what are now alleged to have been anti-Maoist positions were the orthodox party line of the time. The only period when most of the so-called "capitalist-roaders" probably did diverge from Mao was in the years between the 1958 great leap forward and the cultural revolution when the party was pragmatically bent on economic recovery in the only way possible.

Why?

Why then this bitter internecine warfare, especially in the one communist party in the world that had been distinguished for its record of almost unbroken unity for more than 30 years? Why did the policy debates that had always been resolved peacefully in inner party councils break out in public in such a violent and unprecedented way?

The answer lies in the quality of Mao's mind in the years immediately preceding the cultural revolution: the growing obsession with the threat of "revisionism" and the accompanying paranoia which led him to reinterpret all his previous judgments of history and character in light of his new monomania. In this state of mind, Mao came to turn more and more to the one person he felt he could trust above all others—his wife. And here he found a catalyst for his increasing suspicions of his old colleagues.

When Mao took Chiang Ching as his fourth wife in 1939, most of the party politburo opposed the match because it meant shunting aside his

third wife, who had accompanied him on the Long March to Yenan earlier in the 1930's, for a third-rate Shanghai actress. The party finally gave its approval, provided the new Mrs Mao would be kept out of politics. And so she was, until the cultural revolution gave her the opportunity to even the score with her old antagonists. Significantly, Liu Shao-chi was one of those who opposed her in 1939; and Lin Piao, who has profited most from the cultural revolution, was Mrs Mao's main supporter.

Among the leaders of the cultural revolution it is Mrs Mao, much more than the sickly figurehead Lin Piao, who has proved to be Mao's active second-in-command. Chou En-lai has all along played a crucial role as chief manager and negotiator and the man who has done the most to keep China's economy functioning, albeit at half-steam. But Mao cannot regard Chou as a true Maoist at heart—he is, in fact, much more justly identified as a moderate than Liu Shao-chi—and Chou will probably hold to his position only as long as Mao feels he needs him.

While Mao lives, China will continue to be ruled by revolutionaries and revolutionary policies. Mao might be persuaded by Chou En-lai to moderate his revolution just enough to allow production lines to start moving normally again. But he might just as easily give in to his own inclination to try another lurch at the millenium like the great leap forward. Under Mao, China cannot be expected to seek a rapprochement with either of its two arch-enemies, the Russians or the Americans; but neither will the strategist of people's war, now preoccupied by events at home, be likely to lead China into foreign military adventures.

After Mao, of course, all calculations change. The cultural revolutionaries, including Mrs Mao, cannot hope to hold on to their power for long without the living charisma of the chairman. If Chou En-lai, six years younger than the 74-year-old Mao, is still alive, he would probably want to direct a rapid return to stable government with a sensible economic policy and possibly a more accommodating posture toward the rest of the world. But neither Chou nor any other significant figure on the Chinese horizon, including all the "capitalist-roaders", would be likely to choose a non-communist alternative. This has been and will be "a revolution within a revolution".

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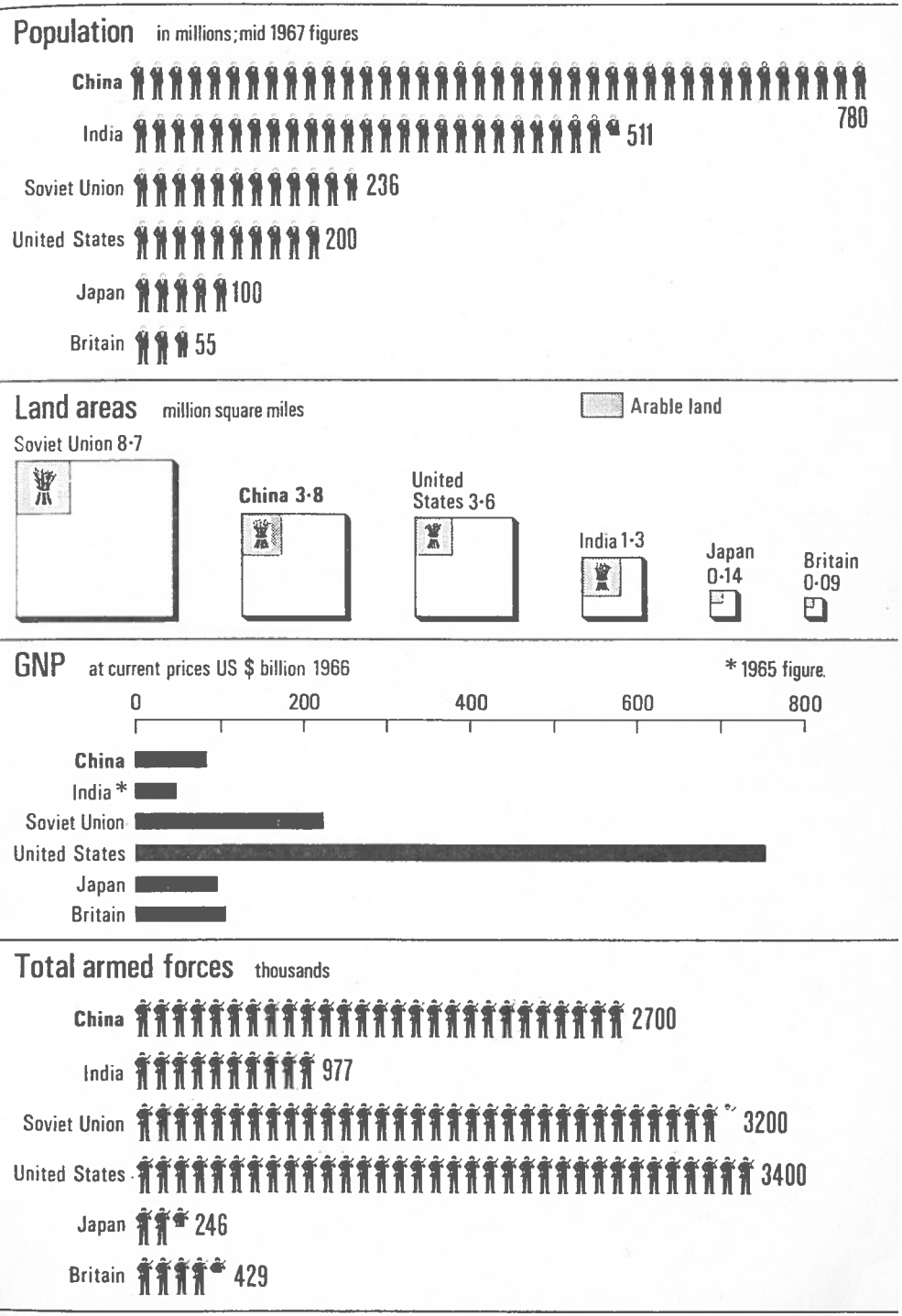

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